Bringing the world to the classroom and the classroom to life

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Engaging Young Learners with Projects

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Poll

How would you describe your young learners? (YLs)?
Some Characteristics of YLs

• Active
• Curious
• Creative
• Easily bored (short attention spans)
• Challenging to teach – especially when you have large classes
• Fun
Activities that help children learn language:

• Involve lots of practice: repetition
• Use language to do things: purposeful
• Are understandable: meaningful
• Lead to success: enjoyable
• Involve interaction: social

(Adapted from C. Read, 1998, p. 1)
What are some activities young learners DO NOT like to do in class?
Students usually don’t like to:

• Memorize lists of vocabulary
• Focus on grammar rules
• Read about things they aren’t interested in
• Be told to be quiet and stop talking to friends
• Be passive
• Never be asked what they know about a topic
• Never be asked for their opinions
• Have an activity last for a very long time
• Be asked to sit while others finish
Now, let’s compare this with project work:

- Instead of memorizing vocabulary or grammar rules, they are using them.
- Instead of being told to be quiet, they can work together on a project, help each other – and talk.
- Instead of being passive, they are active.
- Instead of not being asked what they know or their opinions, they can share these while doing the project.
- And, they can work until they finish, and if they are done early, they can share their project with others who are also done or help others.
Projects: Experiential Learning

Projects are “knowledge in action.”
(Wrigley, 1998)

“Learning through projects” or “experiential learning” “is a tried and tested way of motivating children – by doing what they naturally like doing and avoiding what they don’t like.”
(Project work with young learners)
What makes projects so engaging?

Learners get to:

• Use their imagination; their creativity
• Make things – and draw, color, use multimedia
• Do their own research and demonstrate what they have learned
• Write and talk about themselves, their families, friends, pets, and interests
• Share what they have made with their peers & their families – or sometimes, an entire school
• Be proud of “their” work – of being an artist, an author, an inventor, etc.
Poll

What are some successful projects you have asked your students to do?

OR

ones you have seen other teachers use?
Projects for Young Learners

Drawings, Collages, Posters, Murals
Booklets, Scrapbooks
Greeting Cards, Poems, Brochures, Ads
Puppets, Masks, Mobiles, Costumes
Interviews, Surveys, News Shows
Timelines, Graphs, Charts
Experiments, Inventions
Role Plays, Drama, Performances
Autobiographies, Photo-autobiographies, Biographies
THE LIST IS ENDLESS!
Characteristics of Successful Projects

While projects vary a great deal in form and language expectations, all projects share the following. They:

• Have a real or authentic audience
• Result in new information for the learners
• Involve an exchange of information among learners
• Require a specific product to be developed and shared in English
• Involve multiple ways of obtaining and sharing results (Internet research, interviews, field trips, etc.)

NOTE: Projects can be short or long, simple or complex.
Successful Projects for YLs Can Take a Little or Long Time

- Create a mural, a poster, an accordion book, etc. (Short term)
- Create a shoebox/pizza box diorama (house, park, habitat) (Short term)
- Do research on plants, animals, places, and create a poster or object to present (Medium term)
- Make masks or costumes and present a play or Reader’s Theater (Medium term)
- Plant seeds in cups/glasses; put some in sun and some not; Water some and not others – Describe what happens. Measure growth (Longer term)
Some Interesting Projects

- Making creative things
- Using your hands
- Writing poetry
- Making class books
- Connecting class with home
- Linking language to math, science, etc.
- Developing caring learners
- Encouraging research
- Developing visual literacy skills
- Developing critical literacy skills
Puppets

22 Make a paper bag puppet.

1. Use a folded paper bag.

2. Draw a face. Glue shapes.

3. Glue on hair.

4. Decorate the clothes.

This is my puppet. His name is Sam. He's sad.

Now I can . . .

- say how people look.
- talk about how people feel.
- talk about what people are doing.
Make a weather mobile.

1. Draw and cut out weather pictures.
2. Cut out clothes pictures.
3. Put ribbon on a hanger. Add the weather pictures.
4. Add the clothes pictures.

Now I can . . .
- talk about the weather.
- talk about my clothes.
- say when it is hot or cold.

It’s cold in winter. I wear my boots, my coat, and my gloves.
Make a mobile. Choose a habitat and animals.

1. Choose an animal and draw it.
2. Research your animal’s habitat. What other animals and plants live there?
3. Draw these animals and plants.
4. Hang the pictures on your mobile.

This is a parrot. It lives in the rainforest. Monkeys live here, too.

Now I can . . .
- name animal habitats.
- say what animals look like.
- talk about animal homes.
22 Make a parade mask.
Decorate it and describe it to the class.

Choose a celebration.
Do research.
Collect materials.
Decorate your mask.

Now I can . . .
- talk about celebrations and festivals.
- tell what happened in the past.
- talk about cultural traditions.

I made the eyes with white, blue, and yellow paper.
Art from Trash

21 Make art from things you throw away.

1. Work in a small group. Collect different types of junk.
2. Look at your collected junk, and decide what to make.
3. Make your work of art.

Now I can . . .

- discuss the importance of reducing, reusing, and recycling.
- discuss art from recycled materials.
- talk about what I can do to help the environment.
- write a biographical paragraph.
Musical Instruments

20 Make an instrument.

1. Work in small groups and research homemade musical instruments.
2. Collect trash and junk, and make a musical instrument.
3. Join other groups with instruments and practice.
4. Have a concert!

We made percussion and wind instruments. They sound awesome!

Now I can . . .
- identify musical instruments.
- talk about musical styles.
- express preferences.
- write a paragraph of contrast.
Getting to Know Classmates

• Children trace their hands on a card.
• They write sentences on each finger about what they like, with a word on each finger. ("I like __.")
• They turn the card over and write their name.
• Then in small groups, the cards are shuffled and learners have to guess who likes all these things.
Fingerprint and Thumbprint Animals
(A, Musielak)
My Name Acrostics

J oyful
A thletic
I ntelligent
M arvelous
E nergetic

S mart
O utgoing
F abulous
I nteresting
A mazing

http://www.enchantedlearning.com/wordlist/adjectivesforpeople.html
Negative Adjectives?
Witch or Monster Acrostics

Wicked
Icky
Terrible
Cruel
Horrible

Mean
Old
Asty
Cary
Terrible
Vil
Otten
More Complex Name Acrostic

My dog’s name is Junior.

He has a black nOse.

He’s 10 years old.

He’s a b----l---g dog.
Shape Poem

Slowly Up
Climb
First

Then I slide doooooooooown Faaaaaaaaast!
Make a class book of Five Senses poems. Think of an experience when you used your five senses. Write about it.

1. Use paper to plan your work for each of the senses.
2. Write sentences.
3. Draw pictures.
4. Write your name.

Cookies are ready. They look colorful and yummy! They taste sweet.

This is a poem about cookies.

Now I can . . .
- Talk about the senses.
- Talk about how things look, feel, taste, sound, and smell.
- Talk about the past.
Make a class scrapbook.
Show and tell your favorite activities. Present your work.

1. Take photos or draw pictures of five weekend activities you like.
2. Make a collage of your photos and drawings.
3. Write about your weekend activities.
4. Add your page to the class scrapbook.

Now I can . . .
- talk about free-time activities.
- talk about the past.
- talk about hobbies.
Make a class Big Book on family features.

1. Find a photo of your family, and talk to your family about physical characteristics you share.
   - Who in your family has eyes like yours?
   - Who has hair like you?
   - Who has the same mouth as you?
   - Who has the same nose as you?

2. Work in groups of four to make a Big Book page.
3. Divide the page into four parts.
4. Paste your picture in one of the four parts.
5. Write the names of relatives that you look like.
Bringing the World into the Classroom: My World Circles

22 Make My World circles.

1. Cut out six circles of different sizes.

2. On the smallest circle, draw a picture of your house and write My House.

3. On the other circles, do the same for My Neighborhood, My Town, My Country, My Continent, and My World.

4. Taking care, join the circles together with a brad.

Now I can . . .
- ask for help.
- give directions.
- talk about my town.
My place in the world project
Celebrating Culture!

21. Make a time capsule of things that show your culture.
   1. Work in small groups.
   2. Talk about things that show your culture.
   3. Choose the best things to include.
   4. Put objects in your time capsule.

Now I can . . .
- talk about why it’s good to save traditions.
- explain how the past makes me who I am.
- write a blog.

We put in a smartphone as something new. But we also put in my grandmother’s embroidered handkerchief because it’s old and traditional.
Greeting Card Acrostic
(Shin & Crandall, Teaching Young Learners English, 2014)

HAPPY VALENTINE'S DAY, SARAH!
Super.
Awesome.
Real friend.
Always fun.
Happy!
Balloon Projects

- Make faces on balloons to represent feelings: sad, happy, tired, bored – then share them with the class and have them guess how the balloon is feeling

- Draw Monsters: in small groups, children give each other directions on how many noses, eyes, ears, etc. to draw on the balloon

(A. Musielak)
20 Make a classroom mural.

1. Work in small groups. Choose a habitat such as an ocean, a forest, or a desert.
2. Discuss how animals protect themselves in that place.
3. In your part of the mural, show some animals that use camouflage and some that survive in other ways.

There is a leaf-tailed gecko on a tree trunk in the rain forest. It uses camouflage to survive. Can you see it?

Now I can . . .
- describe animal features.
- describe how animals protect themselves.
- talk about ways animals imitate others.
- write a paragraph of classification.
22 Research and make a model of a type of place where you think we could find life.

1. Choose a type of place you think might have life.
2. Research information.
3. Use the information you find and your imagination to re-create the surface of the type of planet or moon you choose. Use cardboard, paper, and other materials.
4. Draw different life forms as you imagine them.

Now I can . . .
- discuss life in space.
- discuss space exploration.
- express my opinion.
- write a persuasive paragraph.
Experimenting: Make a Volcano

20 Make a model of an erupting volcano.
1. Get a cardboard tube about 4 cm wide and 20 cm long.
2. Cover the bottom of the tube with clay. Stick the tube up on cardboard.
3. Crush balls of newspaper. Tape them to the tube to make a cone.
4. Cover the cone with aluminum foil. Paint or glue sand on it.
5. Fill half the tube with baking soda.
6. Add red food color to vinegar. Pour it in the tube and watch it erupt!

Now I can . . .
- discuss volcanoes.
- describe how a volcano erupts.
- make predictions.
- write a process paragraph.
Supporting Learning in Other Classes

20 Make a counting book.

1. Cut out the pictures on page 154.
2. Decide how many.
3. Color and glue the pictures.
4. Draw more pictures and write the number.

Now I can . . .
- name classroom objects.
- count classroom objects.
- name colors of objects.

Look! Six books.
Helping Save Sea Animals

21 Make posters and cards about ways to help sea animals.

1. Research information.
2. Make posters.
3. Make cards to hand out.
4. Invite people to a community clean-up.
5. At your event, take photos for a school newspaper article.

Now I can . . .

- identify sea life.
- describe characteristics of sea life.
- talk about protecting the oceans.
- write a paragraph of contrast.

Our poster is about why it’s important to protect coral reefs.
Encouraging Positive Behavior

22 **Make a collage.** Show ways people care.

1. Cut out a big circle.
2. Collect and draw pictures that show caring.
3. Glue the pictures to cover the circle.
4. Tell the class about your collage.

**Now I can...**
- Talk about caring for others.
- Describe daily routines.
- Talk about how many times people do things.
Plant a Seed & Watch It Grow
Measure Growth Over Time
Vary Conditions (sun, water, etc.)
Encouraging Research

20. Make a poster about life in the past and life now.

1. Choose a topic such as clothing, toys, sports, food, houses, or games.
2. Research information about your topic in the past and now.
3. Compare and contrast details related to your topic.
4. Cut out or draw pictures to support your writing.
5. Create a poster with your pictures and information.

Kites are my favorite toy. But they weren’t always toys!

Now I can . . .

- describe what people did in the past.
- talk about what the past was like.
- compare the past and the present.
- write a unified paragraph.
Encouraging Research


1. Think about who your favorite famous person is.
   • What does he or she do? Why is he or she famous?
   • What do you like about him or her?
2. Research some information about your favorite person.
3. Make a page for the class book.
   • Glue a picture.
   • Write a summary about your favorite person.

Now I can . . .

- identify different types of entertainment.
- compare people and activities.
- talk about my favorite people and things.
- give my opinion.
Encouraging Research

20 Research a mystery.

1. Choose a mystery that you are interested in.
2. Find pictures and information to use in a poster.
3. Include a brief report as part of your poster presentation.

Now I can . . .

- talk about famous discoveries.
- discuss historical mysteries.
- speculate about the past.
- use examples to support my writing.

Some people think these mysterious lines were made by aliens.

The Nasca lines are very big drawings in the South of Peru. The Nasca people lived there 2,000 years ago. The lines were discovered in the 1920s. The drawings show huge animals, people, shapes and lines.
Old MacDonald’s Farm
with Familiar Animal Sounds

• Small project for you and your children: Insert the sounds animals make in their own language

Old MacDonald had a farm
E-I-E-I-O
And on his farm he had a cow
E-I-E-I-O
With a moo moo here
And a moo moo there
Here a moo, there a moo
Everywhere a moo moo
Old MacDonald had a farm
E-I-E-I-O

Are there other animals they can add?
Can they find out how these animals sound in other languages?
Story-retelling with Drawings

Mrs. Byrd's Learning Tree

Goldilocks and the Three Bears

*Name* [redacted]

**Setting**
- forest
- house

**Characters**
- medium bear
- little bear
- Goldilocks

**Beginning**
The bears are going on a walk.

**Middle**
Goldilocks is sitting in Baby Bear's chair.

**End**
The bears are finding Goldilocks in the bed!
Integrate Math with a Story
Acting Out a Story
(The Very Hungry Caterpillar)
Reader’s Theater
Developing Visual Literacy Skills

23 Make a class bar graph about favorite types of transportation.

1. Cut out a 10 cm (4 in.) square piece of paper.

2. Write your name and draw your favorite type of transportation.

3. With your class, make a bar graph for your pictures.

4. Glue your pictures in place.

Now I can . . .

- identify different kinds of transportation.
- describe ways of traveling.
- compare and contrast.
Daily Schedule

22 Make an accordion book.

1 Fold.

2 Write the day on the cover.

3 Write and draw on the pages.

4 Write your name.

Now I can . . .
- talk about what I do every day.
- talk about when I do things.
- name parts of the day.

On Sunday I always get up at 8:30.
Plan an extreme sports camp.

1. Work in groups. Use the graphic organizer to help you describe your camp.

   - where
   - name of camp
   - who for
   - how long
   - type of equipment
   - which sports

2. Make a brochure or a web page about the camp.
   a. Write a short summary about the camp. Why is it a great place for visitors or for people to spend their vacation?
   b. Add photos, pictures, and a map.

Our summer camp is super fun! You can try all kinds of extreme sports, and you'll be near the mountains and the ocean!

Now I can...
- discuss extreme sports.
- discuss safety in sports.
- describe people and actions.
- write a biographical paragraph.
Developing Critical Literacy Skills

20 Make a collage of ads.

1. Choose a product. Cut out advertisements that sell your product.
2. Analyze the ads.
   a. Who is responsible for the ad? What are they advertising?
   b. Who is the advertiser selling the product to?
   c. What techniques does the ad use?
   d. What does the ad say or suggest about the product?
3. Make a collage using the ads.

Now I can . . .
- talk about products and their characteristics,
- talk about preferences,
- report commands and questions,
- write a product review.
Why Use Projects?

Poll

What are some benefits of using projects in your classes?
Benefits of Projects for YLs

Projects:
- Encourage learner independence
- Provide ways for children to apply what they learning (vocabulary, grammar, etc.)
- Help link school with home and community
- Support learning in other classes
- Encourage creativity and communication
- Make learning more enjoyable
- Appeal to different learning styles
- Bring the classroom to life

...And They Are Fun!
Projects Also Develop 21st Century Skills

• The 4 C’s of:
  • Creativity
  • Communication
  • Collaboration
  • Critical Thinking

(Partnership for 21st Century Skills)
Benefits of Projects for Language Learning

• Build on previous language activities
• Require authentic use of English
• Integrate skills (Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing)
• Connect classroom with the wider world
  Bring the world into the classroom
  Take learners outside the classroom to the world
• Make learning meaningful and purposeful
• Challenge learners to use English in new ways
Projects for Different Learning Styles

Linguistic/Verbal: five senses poetry, daily schedule
Mathematical/Logical: transportation chart, extreme sports camp
Interpersonal/Social: class scrapbook, culture capsule
Personal: my world circles, family features
Kinesthetic: mobile; art from trash
Musical: create and play an instrument
Naturalist: mural of plant and animal habitat, poster to help sea animals
Guidelines for YL Projects

• Give very clear directions. Show children a model of what you want them to produce.

• Be sure all needed supplies and resources are available.

• Provide opportunity for children to use what they know and are learning.

• Engage their imagination.

• Connect to their lives inside and outside of school.
Challenges for YL Projects

- Children need lots of monitoring. Check on their progress often.
- Allow enough time (including some time at home and time to clean up the room at the end of class).
- Expect noise! (Noise is good for learning, but maybe not for relations with other teachers!) Explain to other teachers what you are doing and close the door!
Whatever the challenges . . .
Projects are worth the effort!
Projects: Knowledge in Action!

Less Teaching: More Learning!
Thank You!

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